

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Re-examination and allowance of the present application is respectfully requested. Upon entry of the above amendment, claims 7-8, 11 and 13 will have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and claims 9 and 12 will have been amended for consideration by the Examiner by incorporating the subject matter of objected claim 13.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding rejections of all the claims pending in the present application. Such action is respectfully requested and is believed to be appropriate and proper.

Initially, Applicants would like to express their appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided.

Turning to the merits of the action, the Examiner objects to claim 13 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants thank the Examiner for this indication. By the present amendment, Applicants cancel objected claim 13, and amend claims 9 and 12 to include the subject matter of objected claim 13 therein. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 9, 10 (which depends from claim 9) and 12 are now in condition for allowance, and respectfully request such an indication by the Examiner.

The Examiner rejects claims 7, 8, and 11 under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,237,040 to TADA in view of U.S. Patent No.

5,881,233 TOYODA et al., and U.S. Patent No. 5,864,676 to BEER et al. By the present amendment, Applicants canceled claims 7, 8, and 11 without prejudice or disclaimer. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that this rejection has been rendered moot.

The Examiner also rejects claims 9, 10, and 12 under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,883,014 to MCERLEAN in view of TOYODA and BEER et al. As noted above, Applicants herewith amend claims 9 and 12 to include substantially all the subject matter of objected claim 13, and thus submit that claims 9, 10 and 12 are in condition for allowance. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw this 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejection.

Applicants respectfully note that the amendments of the claims have been made merely to advance the prosecution of the present application towards allowance, and thus, should not be taken as an acquiescence of the appropriateness of the rejections. Further, Applicants expressly reserve the right to submit claims of a corresponding scope in another application. Thus, the amendments of the claims in the present application are without prejudice or disclaimer.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding objection and rejections, and request an indication of the allowability of all the claims pending in the present application, in due course.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance, and believe that they have done so. Applicants have canceled rejected claims without prejudice or disclaimer, and have amended rejected claims for consideration by the Examiner. With respect to the pending claims, Applicants have pointed out the features thereof. Applicants have provided a clear evidentiary basis supporting the patentability of all the claims in the present application and respectfully request an indication of the allowability of all the claims pending in the present application in due course.

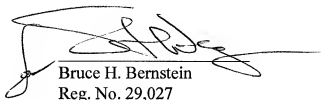
The amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should an extension of time be necessary to maintain the pendency of this application, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

P21380.A09

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
Akimoto MASAO et al.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bruce H. Bernstein', is written over a horizontal line.

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